

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION MID-PACIFIC REGION

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Water Acquisition from East Side Canal & Irrigation Company for East Bear Creek Unit of San Luis National Wildlife Refuge (2011-2016)

FONSI 11-XX-MP

Recommended by:

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Date: _____



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BACKGROUND

In conformance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has prepared this Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate and disclose any potential environmental impacts associated with Reclamation's acquisition of water from the East Side Canal & Irrigation Company (Company) and conveyance of that water to the East Bear Creek Unit (Unit) of the San Luis National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) Complex. Reclamation proposes to purchase water supplies annually from the Company between March 1, 2011, through and including February 28, 2016. This proposed acquisition is being undertaken pursuant to, and would be in full compliance with, Sections 3406(b)(3) and 3406(d)(2) of Title XXXIV of the Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA), which authorizes new water supply contracts for fish and wildlife purposes.

The purpose of the Proposed Action is for Reclamation to purchase up to 7,295 AF of water per year, during water years 2011 through 2016, to meet the Unit's Level 2 requirements to provide critical wetland habitats for the benefit of migratory waterfowl, other migratory birds, and wetland-dependent wildlife. Level 2 water is needed to meet the Unit's average historical use, as identified in the Report on Refuge Water Supply Investigations dated March 1989. The Proposed Action does not involve any construction activities and would not cause any land use changes.

FINDINGS

In accordance with NEPA, the Mid-Pacific Regional Office of Reclamation has found that the proposed acquisition of water is not a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Consequently, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. This determination is supported by the following factors:

1. Water Resources: The Proposed Action would deliver water to Unit wetland areas on a schedule that meets refuge water needs as compared to the No Action Alternative. Therefore, the Proposed Action provides a beneficial effect to wetland habitat areas located within the Unit by providing a water supply of suitable quality on a delivery schedule that meets their needs. The Proposed Action would not result in significant impacts San Joaquin River flows. There would be a negligible water quality benefit to the San Joaquin River basin due to improved water quality applied to the Unit. The Proposed Action would result in no substantial change or impact to CVP operations or to Delta pumping by the CVP. The acquired water would be delivered to the refuge using existing conveyance facilities. The conveyance of water would not impact existing water supplies.

The Proposed Action would not adversely impact groundwater resources in the area because no groundwater would be pumped. The acquired surface water would be delivered to the refuge using existing conveyance facilities. The conveyance of water would not impact existing water supplies.

2. Biological Resources: The Proposed Action is not anticipated to adversely affect biological resources, including special-status species; therefore, no consultation is required under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. There is no construction associated with the Proposed Action; therefore, no impacts to biological resources are anticipated. The Proposed Action will help to sustain wetland habitat within the Unit, thereby continuing to support vital habitat to those species relying on water.

3. Indian Trust Assets: Due to the nature of the action (i.e., no construction activities), there are no impacts to ITAs as a result of the Proposed Action.

4. Cultural Resources: The Proposed Action would acquire water for Unit wetland areas on a schedule that meets refuge water needs. Water would be conveyed through existing facilities and would be used for wildlife refuge or wetland habitat water management. No ground disturbing activities, including excavation or construction are required to convey the water. Since the Proposed Action has no potential to affect historic properties, no cultural resources would be impacted as a result of the Proposed Action pursuant to 36 CFR Part 800.3(a)(1).

5. Environmental Justice: No significant changes in agricultural communities or practices would result from this acquisition. Accordingly, the Proposed Action would not have any significant or disproportionately negative impact on low-income or minority individuals within the project area.

6. Climate Change: The Proposed Action would not include any significant change on the composition of the atmosphere and therefore would not result in adverse impacts to climate change.

7. Cumulative Impacts: The Proposed Action would not result in any additions to irrigated lands or otherwise induce land use changes. Rather, the intended effect is to maintain current land use and prevent deterioration of existing wildlife habitat; therefore, there are no anticipated cumulative effects resulting from the Proposed Action.